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Abstract: Although survey research is one of the most frequently used methods to study charitable giving, the quality of the data is seldom recognised or known. In particular, social desirability bias (SDB) has been found to distort the validity of data where respondents tend to over-report what is socially desirable and vice versa. We argue that this phenomenon has not been fully understood in the nonprofit context as existing social desirability scales are not appropriate to use in giving surveys. Thus, this paper is the first to extend understanding of SDB to the nonprofit context and to explore its motivating factors.

Based on a multi-disciplinary literature review and qualitative interviews with senior personnel from the fundraising and marketing research sectors, the findings suggest that SDB is a multidimensional construct yielding seven dimensions, namely motives for giving, impression management, self deception, level of involvement, perceived benefits, social norms and mode of survey administration. The paper discusses the implications for nonprofit researchers and concludes with directions for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive environment, it is important for charities to understand their donors' behavior and attitudes through marketing research. Although survey research is one of the most popular ways to study altruistic behavior, the quality of survey data is seldom recognized or known (Hall, 2001; Bekkers, 2007). Donors are notoriously inaccurate in reporting the amounts of giving, whether it is due to poor memory or conscious desire to inflate their giving in order to appear more generous than they actually are. Thus, it is not surprise to see evidence of wide discrepancies in the charity giving studies examining similar timeframes (Slack, 2008). For example, estimates of the total value of giving do not often match the level of income that charities themselves report in similar timeframes (Brown & Burlingame, 2001). In addition, the giving trends reported by various surveys are found to contradict with each another (see for example, MacQuillin, 2005 and Wilhelm, 2007).

In the context of giving, people generally want to appear more altruistic and socially orientated than they truly are (Sudman & Bradburn, 1982). When responding to questions about their past or future giving, respondents typically bias their responses in the direction of social desirability in order to create a good impression or avoid embarrassment (Hall, 2001). This type of survey distortion is called social desirability bias (SDB) and is regarded as one of the most common and important forms of response bias (Bardwell & Dimsdale, 2001). In general, it refers to the tendency of respondents to over-report what is socially desirable and under-report what is not (Paulhus, 1991; Bardwell & Dimsdale, 2001; Nancarrow et al., 2001; Chung & Monroe, 2003). If no action is taken to deal with this form of response bias, SDB could seriously contaminate the research findings and possibly affect management decision-making.

A review of previous SDB research identifies two important gaps which need to be addressed. Firstly, SDB is weakly conceptualized. Although there is general agreement on its definition, considerable debate surrounds its dimensionality and whether this is uni-dimensional, bi-dimensional or multi-dimensional (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Paulhus, 1984, 1991; Fisher, 2000; Beretvas et al., 2002). As a consequence, different social desirability scales were developed and used in various studies. Without clear consensus on this issue, it is difficult for researchers to select the most appropriate social desirability scale. Secondly, extant research indicates that respondents who misreport are typically associated with personality differences (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Randall & Fernandes, 1991), and that the level of SDB may also be context-specific (Fisher, 2000). Respondents' motivation to over-report donation amounts might be different from other socially desirable behaviors such as voting and recycling. Woodside and Wilson (2002) argue that understanding the antecedents leading to inaccuracy is helpful in increasing the accuracy of self reports. Thus, this paper aims to (1) to conceptualize SDB more clearly in terms of its dimensions by presenting a conceptual model, and (2) to identify the motivational factors associated with SDB specific to giving behavior.

PREVIOUS DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF SDB

The phenomenon of SDB has been studied for more than 50 years, generally in the fields of psychology, sociology and more recently marketing. In a review of marketing research findings published in six rigorous marketing journals from 1980 to 1997, only 13 papers reported testing for social desirability bias (King & Bruner, 2000). This figure is not surprising given the

complexities of the phenomenon and the fact that there are still many unanswered questions about its conceptualization, detection and measurement (Fisher, 2000).

An early study defined social desirability bias as "… the need of subjects to obtain approval by responding in a culturally appropriate and acceptable manner" (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960, p. 353). More specifically, it refers to respondents' conscious or unconscious desire to conform to the actual, or perceived values of the society and/or culture to which they belong (Fisher, 1993). There appears to be some similarities in these definitions in which the role of perceived social norms is crucial in guiding respondents' responses. Thus, in this study, social desirability bias will refer to respondents' tendencies to present themselves in a favorable manner with regard to social norms, instead of what they truly believe, feel or do. This may result in over-reporting socially desirable behaviors and under-reporting socially undesirable ones. It has also been associated with a respondent's wish to impress interviewers (Paulhus, 1991) and more recently, the desire to influence the outcome of a study by giving responses that they believe will lead to a particular conclusion (Brace, 2004).

SDB can distort research data in various ways. Ganster et al. (1983) discuss that SDB may create spuriousness such as misleading correlations between variables, suppress or hide relationships between variables, and finally moderate or interact with relationships between variables. These effects may jeopardise the validity of research findings if researchers do not use appropriate measures to detect and reduce the response bias.

The scale most commonly used to control for SDB, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) assumes that socially desirable responses represent a single

latent construct. However, this assumption has not been adequately validated (Leite & Beretvas, 2003). Crowne and Marlowe (1960) associated social desirability with personality traits. They identified a single underlying construct to their scale and called it the *need for approval*. This refers to the extent to which an individual searches for the approval of others and tries to avoid their disapproval. The logic behind this construct is that an average individual would not always behave in a socially desirable manner. Thus, a person with higher need for approval would tend to present more socially desirable responses than the average person.

An alternative SDB scale was developed by Paulhus (1984). The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) consists of two different factors called 'self deception positivity/enhancement' (SDE) and 'impression management' (IM). SDE refers to honest, but positively biased responses and IM refers to intentional faking by individuals so as to present themselves in a positive light. These factors were later relabelled by Paulhus and John (1998) as 'egoistic' and 'moralistic' bias. Both factors involve the tendency for individuals to present themselves in a favourable way. In egoistic bias, individuals attempt to look good by exaggerating their competencies, abilities, status and achievements. In moralistic bias, individuals attempt to look good by conforming to the rules, fitting in and not engaging in deviant behaviors.

Clearly there is a lack of consensus in the literature on how SDB should be conceptualized and measured. It is still unclear whether SDB consists of one, two or more dimensions, and hence, the decision to select the most appropriate scale becomes difficult. It is also important to note that because scale items are for general use and not directly related to the topic of research, for example researching drug usage or giving behaviors, questions about the effectiveness of existing scales can be raised. Thus, it is important to take context into consideration when measuring

SDB, as respondents may exhibit varying levels of social desirability across different contexts, especially in the context of giving.

ANTECEDENTS OF SDB

Extant literature has pointed out that socially desirable responding is generally motivated by a desire to create a good impression (Paulhus, 1984) and positive self deception (Paulhus, 1984, Randall & Fernandes, 1991). Donors may misreport in order to avoid embarrassment or to 'lose face' when they think that their giving behavior does not match the social norm (Grice, 1975; Berinsky, 2004).

Some donors choose to give to a particular charity because they have personal experience or involvement with a cause (Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007). In the case of supporting cancer charities, some of these supporters may have experience in fighting the disease or lost someone they loved in the process. In a recent study of consumer diary panellists, Toh et al. (2006) argue that SDB is linked with high involvement activities. Thus, highly involved donors may be more likely to give socially desirable responses.

Donors' interest in societal norms may also influence the likelihood of giving socially desirable responses. Keillor et al. (2001) are the first to employ Moschis and Churchill's (1978) consumer socialization theory in the study of SDB. Socialization is defined as the process through which norms, attitudes, motivations and behaviors are transmitted from societal influencers to individuals. Hence, this increases the pressure to behave in a socially expected manner in order to

gain social approval. In a study of levels of compliance, Reingen (1978) showed that by using a fictitious list of donors and donations, the public are compelled to give more than they normally would. Therefore, individuals are likely to behave in a similar fashion to others in order to avoid social disapproval. This may explain the popularity of wristbands as a way to 'fit in' with a social group and associate with the cause (Potter, 2005).

Different survey administration methods have been found to affect the degree of social desirability effects. In comparing two parallel surveys, one online and the other face-to-face, Duffy et al. (2005) indicate that respondents are more susceptible to socially desirable responding in the presence of an interviewer. In another study, Taylor et al. (2005) show that by eliminating interviewer effects, several topics such as 'belief in God, driving over the speed limit, giving money to charity and gambling' appear to produce more representative results. Individuals also have stronger incentive to make a positive impression in situations where there is an interviewer present (Levin & Montag, 1987). By comparing different modes of self administration surveys, a recent study (Kreuter et al., 2008) found that web administration increased the level of reporting of sensitive information and reporting accuracy relative to conventional CATI (conventional computer-assisted telephone interviewing) and IVR (interactive voice recognition). Thus, these studies highlight the potential influence of survey administration method on the level of socially desirable responding, in addition to the factors discussed above.

The antecedents which emerge from the literature review are relevant to the topic in hand, but do not specifically relate to the context of giving. It is worth therefore considering the nature of giving behaviour, to establish whether there are any SDB antecedents particular to this context. We consider motives for giving behaviour to provide a potential SDB antecedent. Motives for

giving broadly fall into altruistic and egoistic categories. Altruistic giving can be defined as behaviour motivated by the desire to increase another's welfare (Amos, 1982), and egoistic giving as the desire to reduce personal distress or to receive rewards for giving (Batson 1991). Altruistic giving has been explained by the empirically supported empathy-altruism hypothesis (Batson 1987, 1991) which claims that the prosocial motivation evoked by empathy is directed towards the goal of increasing the welfare of another in need. Empathy can be defined as an 'individual's emotional arousal elicited by the expression of emotion in another' (Sargeant and Woodliffe 2007 p. 292). We propose that altruistic donors are less motivated to fake responses in order to look good in front of others. It seems logical to suggest that these donors are more focused on internal satisfaction rather than what other people think. However, other authors have suggested that the presence of empathy increases feelings of personal distress or sadness, and that it is distress or sadness which motivate the helping behaviour, as individuals attempt to reduce these negative emotions and enhance their mood (Schaller and Cialdini 1988, Fultz et al., 1988). This has been referred to as the 'negative state relief model' (Cialdini et al. 1987) and suggests empathy could be egoistically motivated. We postulate that egoistic donors who seek external rewards or demonstrate self-oriented reactions to another's need (Piferi et al., 2006) are more likely to respond in a socially desirable manner. They may fake their responses in order to protect or boost their self esteem and to gain public recognition.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory study was to identify the antecedents that motivate donors to give socially desirable responses in giving surveys. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect

data because they were less intrusive than focus groups and respondents could give honest opinions without any peer pressure (Burgess, 1982). This technique is also common among social science researchers (McCracken, 1990; Minichiello et al., 1995). The sampling strategy was based on 'reputational case selection', whereby 'experts' or 'key informants' are identified and approached (Goetz & Lecompte, 1984). The aim of reputational case selection is to locate individuals who are considered to be knowledgeable, reliable and accurate in reporting events. In this case, seven individuals were selected who have responsibility for or dealings with research data, and/or who work within the charity sector. Of these, two were Fundraising Directors (one for a national animal welfare charity and one for a children's charity), three were independent fundraising consultants, one the Research Director of a leading UK market research agency and one the Managing Director of a UK qualitative research agency. It is important to note that when conducting interviews with key informants or experts there is a risk that they are likely to have the same views as each other, which could lead the researcher to assume greater uniformity than is actually the case. This potential limitation was addressed by including the views of both market research and fundraising experts.

Five of the seven interviews were conducted face-to-face and two by telephone (two respondents were based outside the UK). The interviews lasted for an hour and a half on average. The topics covered by the questions were threefold. Firstly, the meaning and awareness of social desirability bias, secondly the potential factors that might motivate donors to give socially desirable responses and finally techniques that would be useful to reduce this type of response bias.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using a word processing package. Due to the small sample size, manual analysis, rather than computer-aided analysis (using a package such as

Nvivo), was deemed appropriate. The guidelines provided by Miles and Hubermann (1994) were followed in the interests of improving the validity of the findings which are presented in the following section.

FINDINGS

The analysis showed that whilst the experts were clearly aware of the potential bias caused by socially desirable responding in giving surveys, they reported the research industry to be slow to respond or ignorant of this issue. When asked about what may have motivated individuals to misreport, a number of themes were uncovered that are of interest to both charities and nonprofit researchers.

Impression management

One of the most frequently occurring themes was an individual's need to create a good impression. The majority of respondents indicated that donors who over-reported their giving behavior were deliberately attempting to create a good impression by enhancing positive values and avoiding embarrassment. They also highlighted several aspects of giving behavior that donors are likely to over-report, in addition to the donation amount.

> *"Probably three main reasons: they want to impress, they want to be seen to be more environmentally friendly, more altruistic than they are, they don't want to be seen to be negative in some respects, doing things that they shouldn't be doing…"* (Director of Research – market research agency)

"I would say the first thing they would overestimate is how much they give. I think they would inflate what they give. I would also say they would inflate how frequently they give. I think it would be all of the factors, actually and thirdly I would think they would over inflate who they give to." (Fundraising Director – animal welfare charity)

"Giving – well, anyone can give, that's almost a passive side. If you talk to them, 'yes, I've got £2 a month going out of my bank account' – well they are almost ashamed of that, which might also be reason to exaggerate it, that it's so little."(Fundraising consultant)

"…an Englishman from the upper class who is making a donation of about £25000 a year…kind of modest about reporting his giving…on the other hand, overstated his volunteering activities." (Fundraising consultant)

In the interviews, some respondents also highlighted the potential relationships between egoistic donors and socially desirable responding. Egoistic donors give with the intention of receiving some form of benefit. The larger the sum the donors had claimed to donate to a specific charity or charities, the higher their ego or self esteem had become and thus, when asked about their giving, they are more likely to attempt to maintain or boost their self esteem by over-reporting:

"I think as you go up the tree in terms of the amount people are giving…use it as a way to show off sometimes, or to access social networks that they couldn't otherwise access

through charity connections…think might over-report" (Fundraising Director – children's charity)

*"For many years I ran a charity auction at a conference and saw people reacting to what other people are giving. It's all about egos and I am going to give more than he's going to giv*e" (Research Director –market research agency)

The fundraising consultant's comments revealed that the need to impress is equally related to cultural values. For example, in the US, donors tend to be more open and relaxed about disclosing information on their giving histories whereas UK or European donors regard philanthropic activities as somewhat individually driven and thus are more modest in disclosing information about their giving activities:

"I think the culture of philanthropy in North America will point me towards impression management… that is to say being external and positioning yourself as being a philanthropic individual. The culture of philanthropy in Europe though keeps on coming up, it's much more modest and self-effacing. In other words, if I am being a true European, I am not going to boast about all the good things I am doing philanthropically and in charity because that will make me personally feel like I was a bad, boastful person, not the modest, quiet person that I would like to be." (Fundraising consultant)

Self deception

Respondents' comments suggest that social desirability bias is not just motivated by the need to create a good impression. Some indicated that individuals genuinely 'fool' themselves that their

positively biased report of donations are true. One of the participants provides us with the following example related to his own behaviour:

> *"I got interviewed at a swimming pool once. That was the first time I'd been for a long time and they said – 'how likely is it you will come to this swimming pool again?' – 'oh, very likely'. 'How often will you come?' 'I'll come once a week' I said. Then I walked away from the interviewer and I thought, 'no I won't.' As it happened I never went again! But for that moment I really fooled myself into thinking… I wasn't trying to impress, but at that moment I really thought I was going to do it."* (Research Director – National Market Research Agency)

One of the reasons why individuals may have overly positive views about their giving is that they tend to give to many charities. As a consequence, donors elevate their perceived level of generosity and self-expectation. They may subconsciously over-claim the amount they have given to a specific charity, guided by the overall amount of money they have donated to various charities in the past.

> *"I think they are thinking about it relatively quickly and rounding up, because I'm a generous kind of guy and it's bound to be that much. But not going through an explicit thought process saying I am going to impress this person by showing how charitable I am." (*Fundraising Director – children's charity)

Interestingly, one of the respondents commented that not all types of support are recorded in a charity's database. As charities tend to have different types of operation, it becomes more

difficult to track down exactly how much an individual may have given in a particular year. For example, some charities are supported by independent local groups, in which case the amount of donation made by an individual may not be recorded or fed back to the head office. This could complicate the task of examining levels of misreporting if researchers want to compare what is reported with what was recorded due to poor data management.

Level of involvement

The findings suggest that donors' level of involvement with a charity may have some influence on the presence of socially desirable responding. However, the direction of the response bias is less clear. The role of giving to charities is perceived positively by many donors. Some individuals consider it their duty to support charities as best they can. One of the fundraising consultants indicated that some donors "rotate the charities that they support". In fact, the level of involvement could vary across different types of charities, whether they were household charities or pressure groups. The view here is that the higher the level of involvement with charities, the higher the expectation of the level of giving. Under certain circumstances where individuals perceive their actual support or giving does not match a perceived expectation, they are more likely to fake their responses. This view is reinforced by a fundraising consultant's comment:

> *"When you ask about charity, what I notice is that there is a great expectation that the respondents want to be able to tell you all the positive things they do in the world of philanthropy and will often exaggerate what they do or go beyond the necessary in term of explaining what they do."* (Fundraising consultant)

Conversely, another respondent indicated that the more involved a donor is with a charity, the more likely he or she is to remember the amount donated and hence to give more accurate responses:

> *"If they interact more with that charity, if they do volunteer for them or campaign for them, I think then they are much more likely to have in their head - OK, this is my charity, I give them £50 a year. So if they are interactive, they are likely to be more committed to that charity and they are probably likely to give them more, then they are more likely to remember. As I say, if they are passive givers and they give to lots of different folks, they may just forget."* (Fundraising consultant)

This comment illustrates an important sub-theme of donors' misreporting, namely memory failure. Indeed, memory failure potentially poses a great threat to the validity of survey questions on giving. Memory failure is likely to be related to how salient an event is. For instance, events such as donating to a box or tin in the high street and one-off donations with little or no direct relationship with charities tend to result in poor recall from individuals.

Perceived benefits of giving

A number of respondents indicated that it was important to understand the motives of giving and how it might relate to donors' misreporting. Not all donors who give to charities are motivated by altruistic motives; there are those who look for benefits in exchange for their gift. For instance, high value donors were identified by key informants to have great interest in 'special treatments' such as invitations to charity dinners. These invitations not only provide them with a great opportunity to network with others, but also to impress others, thus elevating their current status.

Given the importance of this social recognition factor, it seems reasonable to suggest that these donors are prone to giving socially desirable responses when necessary:

> *"…showing off, gaining social recognition tends to happen more at that upper end. … the extent of pay-off that you can get...you get invited to some nice things and you get to meet some nice people…"* (Fundraising Director – children's charity)

> *"it's become a thing you can tell your friend – I can't see you on Tuesday because I am going to Buckingham Palace, or XYZ charity dinner…gives you a little opportunity to show off as well."* (Fundraising consultant)

Equally, individuals who pay less attention to tangible benefits as a result of giving are less likely to engage in socially desirable responding. Some respondents indicated that donors' motives to give could be due to a personal link to the charity or cause. One of the fundraising consultants commented that *"people give to charity because they themselves are helped by charity at some point or they know somebody who is helped by charities like cancer societies/foundations"*. Individuals who give based on this motive may have less need to fake their responses. Indeed, they give because they want to "feel better about themselves" (Fundraising Director – animal welfare charity) and may care less about what other people think.

Social norms

The influence of social norms is strongly suggested in the interviews. A number of respondents indicated that it was very important for some individuals to belong to a group or community. Thus, in order to gain social approval and fit in with a particular group, individuals tend to give

favourable responses rather than honest ones. This might be due to social expectations that exist in the group:

> *"…if you were to ask people today which charity they've supported in the last 3 months, I think a lot of people would mention the tsunami, or a charity related in terms of support to an event that occurred. There's a social expectation that everybody should be helping that. So to exclude something that could be contributing to that, people may feel that they are not meeting the social standards that everyone else is."* (Fundraising Director – animal welfare charity)

> *"most people do wish to be part of the community, sometimes they make a small community in terms of direct family, others may be part of a larger community in terms of their own social, racial or geographic groups…"* (Fundraising consultant)

The preceding discussion indicates that there are several antecedents to SDB that need to be considered when designing research instruments and collecting data. In the next section these antecedents are presented in the form of a conceptual model. The implications for research practice are also discussed.

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF SOCIAL DESIRABILITY BIAS IN NONPROFIT RESEARCH

Drawing on the literature review and interview findings, a conceptual model was created which can be found in Figure 1. The model clearly shows SDB to be a multidimensional construct,

consisting of motives for giving in general, intrinsic and extrinsic motives and survey administration mode. Intrinsic antecedents refer to underlying individual motives which can cause socially desirable responding, whilst the extrinsic antecedent refers to influences derived from social norms that are beyond an individual's direct control. An individual's motive for giving (altruistic or egoistic) influences the level and importance of the intrinsic and extrinsic motives. Where an individual's motives for giving are egoistic, it is more likely that he or she will engage in socially desirable responding. The extent to which intrinsic and extrinsic antecedents influence responding is moderated by the method of survey administration, that is, a face-to-face survey may incur greater levels of SDB than a self-administered survey.

<Insert Figure 1 near here>

Starting with intrinsic antecedents, these include the internal need to manage impression, overly positive self deception, and the perceived level of involvement with the charity or cause and seeking benefits which accrue from giving. The higher the level of one or more of these factors, the higher the degree of socially desirable responding (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Paulhus, 1991; Beretvas et al., 2002). The first internal antecedent – the internal need to manage impression - is related to protecting self-interest and boosting low self-esteem. Individuals with a propensity to impression manage are concerned about not embarrassing themselves or avoiding giving a negative impression. To reduce socially desirable responding arising from this motive, face-saving techniques (Holtgraves et al., 1997) can be incorporated into the design of the questionnaire. This means paying careful attention to question phrasing, by providing a reason in the question as to why respondents might behave in a socially undesirable way or not behave in a socially desirable way. For example, when researching voting behavior, Belli et al. (1997) used

face saving questions such as ‘they thought about voting but did not’, or ‘they usually vote but did not do it this time’ to minimise socially desirable responding.

The need to impression manage may be higher when there is an interviewer present during data collection (face-to-face and telephone interviews). In order to reduce this ‘face’ threat, indirect questioning, which requires respondents to project their responses to a third party, can be useful. In this context, it allows respondents to ‘save face’ when revealing what they really think, feel or do (Fisher, 1993). Adopting alternative modes of survey administration, such as online surveys, may also help to reduce the effects of impression management heightened by the presence of an interviewer. In addition to the elimination of interviewer effects, online surveys also offer greater speed and lower costs (Duffy et al., 2005). However, the use of online interviewing may not be suitable for demographic groups known to have lower online usage. It is therefore important for charities to be aware of their donors’ intensity of internet usage. Where internet usage varies amongst donors, nonprofit researchers could utilize a mixed-method approach, combining results from postal or telephone surveys with online surveys.

Whilst impression management may be undesirable in the context of fundraising and giving research, it could have a positive impact on soliciting charitable donations. Interviews highlighted that donors who are keen to create a good impression are more likely to give, and to increase the donation amount when approached directly by fundraisers in the street, door-to-door or over the telephone.

Moving next to the self deception motive, individuals who engage in self deception may not be deliberately over-reporting in order to present themselves in a positive light. The interviews highlighted that some donors tend to give to more than one charity annually. Subconsciously, it is

very easy for them to perceive themselves as being overly kind and generous compared to the average person. Interestingly, some researchers have hypothesised that the self deception motive may be linked to personality traits and thus, should not be controlled (McCrae & Costa 1983; Paulhus, 2002). Individuals who engage in self deception are consistently found to exaggerate their positive attributes. Nonprofit researchers need to decide whether self deception is a contamination or merely personality variable in their research design. In this study, we took a view that socially desirable responding is a conscious reaction to self presentation and thus, should be fully understood and controlled. This view is consistent and supported by all the interviewees. A possible solution is to develop a measurement instrument designed to detect an individual's level of self deception. Where high levels of self deception are revealed, a decision can be made on whether to include or eliminate the responses of such individuals.

With regard to level of involvement and how it drives SDB, there is no clear agreement in the literature review or the interview data on the direction of the response bias. Although both offer feasible explanations as to how donors' levels of involvement may impact on their responses, further empirical testing is required to establish if higher levels of involvement lead to higher levels of SDB. Equally, further study is required on the extent to which the perceived benefits motives, both tangible and emotional, influences the likelihood of socially desirable responding. Again, the development of a scale that could measure donor involvement and perceived benefits would be useful.

The extrinsic antecedent, social norms, is fundamentally concerned with the extent to which individuals are motivated to conform to rules and not engage in unusual behaviors. Thus, when

donors perceive they have not behaved in a way that fits with social norms, they are more likely to fake their responses in order to fit in with the group or gain social approval.

CONCLUSION

Given the increasing inconsistencies between the findings of giving and volunteering surveys conducted in similar timeframes, it is important for nonprofit researchers to pay more attention to the potential causes of these inconsistencies. One such cause is socially desirable responding and SDB. Little is known about SDB in the context of charitable giving, a gap which this paper has started to address. Indeed, it is the first to extend understanding of the phenomenon of socially desirable responding to the nonprofit context.

By combining findings from a literature review with qualitative research, we have presented a conceptual model which identifies the antecedents that could potentially motivate donors to respond to survey questions in a socially desirable manner. These are the type of motive (altruistic or egoistic) behind giving behaviour, the survey administration mode used to collect the data, intrinsic SDB motives such as the need to impression manage and the influence of perceived social norms in giving behaviour.

Whilst there is still much work to do on this topic, particularly in terms of the scale development discussed above, the conceptual model provides a useful starting point for nonprofit researchers by highlighting the potential motives for socially desirable responding and how the effects of such motives on data quality could be reduced. It is acknowledged, however, that to improve the

model, the views of donors need to be sought, and empirical testing is required to support and develop the model.

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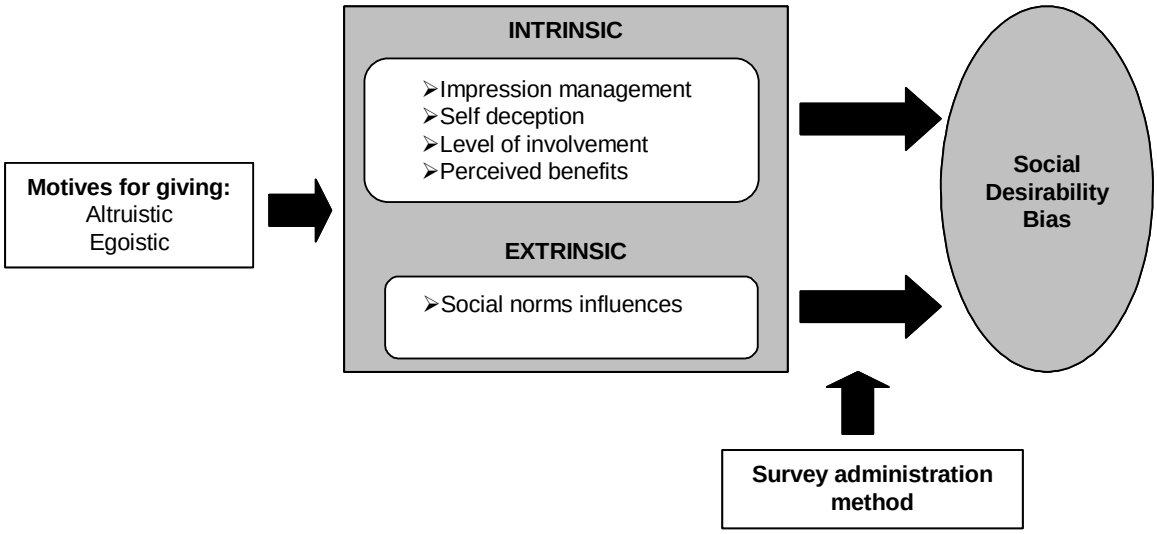

Figure 1: Conceptual model of SDB in a nonprofit context

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Donor misreporting: Conceptualizing social desirability bias in giving surveys

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